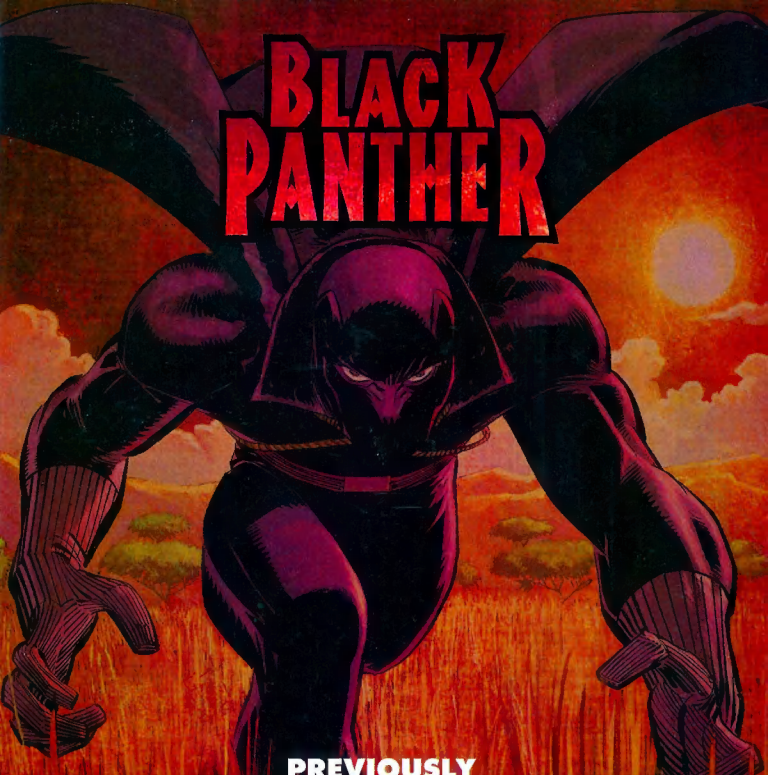

PREVIOUSLY

There are some places you just don't mess with. Wakanda is one of them. Since the dawn of time, that African warrior nation has been sending would-be conquerors home in body bags. While the rest of Africa got carved up like a Christmas turkey by the rest of the world, Wakanda's cultural evolution has gone unchecked for centuries, unfettered by the yoke of colonization. The result: A hi-tech, resource-rich, ecologically-sound paradise that makes the rest of the world seem primitive by comparison.

Ruling over all this is the Black Panther.

The Black Panther is more than just the embodiment of a warrior cult that's served as Wakanda's religious, political and military head since its inception. The Black Panther is the embodiment of the ideals of a people. Anyone who'd dare to make a move on Wakanda must go through him.

And that's exactly what someone intends to do. His name is Klaw, he's read the history books, and he knows exactly what he's getting himself into. Klaw is assembling a team to do what's never been done before.

To successfully invade Wakanda.

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...YOU'VE TOLD US A LOT ABOUT WAKANDA, EVERETT. THEY'VE GOT INCREDIBLE NATURAL RESOURCES, TECHNOLOGY ON PAR WITH THE U.S.A.--
--AND A BAD ATTITUDE WHEN IT COMES TO INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION, DONDI!
NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCY
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
RIGHT. WHAT WE DON'T KNOW IS:
WHO IS THE BLACK PANTHER?
HIS NAME IS T'CHALLA. SON OF T'CHAKA.

WHO IS THE BLACK PANTHER?
PART TWO
REGINALD HUDLIN WRITER
JOHN ROMITA JR. PENCILS
KLAUS JANSON INKS
DEAN WHITE COLORS
CHRIS ELIOPOULOS LETTERS
CORY SEDLMEIER ASST. EDITOR
AXEL ALONSO EDITOR
JOE QUESADA EDITOR IN CHIEF
DAN BUCKLEY PUBLISHER

LOOK, SON...

...IT'S HIM....

...THE BLACK PANTHER IS THE RULER OF WAKANDA. IT'S A SPIRITUALLY-BASED WARRIOR CULT. SORT OF LIKE BEING POPE, PRESIDENT AND HEAD OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF ALL AT ONCE...

"...THE PANTHER IS A HEREDITARY TITLE...
OOOOOHHHHHH!
HE'S NOT THAT BIG IN PERSON.
NOPE.
"...BUT YOU STILL HAVE TO EARN IT."

"THE SERIES OF TESTS THAT A PANTHER MUST PASS ARE SO ARDUOUS THAT ONLY CANDIDATES WHO'VE HAD SPECIAL TRAINING FROM CHILDHOOD CAN QUALIFY.
"BUT JUST SO EVERYONE GETS A CHANCE, ONCE A YEAR THERE'S A DAY WHEN ANY WAKANDAN CAN CHALLENGE THE KING FOR THE THRONE.
"SO AS ROYAL LINEAGES GO, IT'S A LOT MORE OF A MERITOCRACY THAN, SAY, ENGLAND."

OW! WATCH WHERE YOU LAND!
OOOOOOOOH...
THAT'S A BIG ONE, K'TYAH.
TRULY, M'SHULA. WITH THOSE MUSCLES HE MUST BE A MINER.

YIKES! THAT TREE TRUNK ALMOST TOOK HIS HEAD OFF!
BUT WATCH THIS: THE PANTHER WILL CHOP HIM INTO FIREWOOD!
OH! LIVER PUNCH! THAT'LL DO HIM!
THAT'S IT?
A KNOCKOUT MAY NOT BE ENOUGH TO TAKE THE CROWN. I MIGHT HAVE TO KILL YOU.

OKAY...EVEN IF THE PANTHER LOSES... THERE'S NO WAY THAT BIG BONEHEAD IS TAKING THE THRONE! THEY HAVE A LITERACY REQUIREMENT!
HAVE YOU HEARD ANYTHING YET?
NO, YOUR HIGHNESS.
I CAN'T TAKE THIS STUPID RITUAL EVERY YEAR! IT'S TOO NERVE-WRACKING.
NOT GOING IS WORSE THAN BEING THERE.
PERHAPS YOU SHOULD VISIT THE PRINCESS. I'M SURE SHE'S DEPRESSED SINCE YOU LOCKED HER IN HER ROOM TO STOP HER FROM ATTENDING THE TOURNAMENT.
GOOD IDEA!
SHURI...IT'S MOTHER!
SHURI?

PRINCESS SHURI! HOW DID YOU LEAVE THE PALACE?
THE QUEEN HAS STRICT ORDERS THAT YOU CANNOT ENTER THE ARENA!
WELL, I HATE TO GET YOU IN TROUBLE...
BUT I GOT TO GO!
MY BROTHER ISN'T THE ONLY PANTHER IN THE FAMILY...
THIS ISN'T GOOD.
AND I NEED THIS JOB!

PAN-THER!!!
PAN-THER!!!
I TOLD YOU HE WOULD COME THROUGH!
NO, I TOLD YOU!
T'SHAN?
MEDIC
HEY... COUSIN...
ANY TIPS FOR ME?
WHAT? YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS... ABOUT FIGHTING...
OH YES I AM!
YOU HAVEN'T EVEN FINISHED YOUR TRAINING...
JUST REST. WE'LL BE BACK TO BANDAGE HER UP LATER.

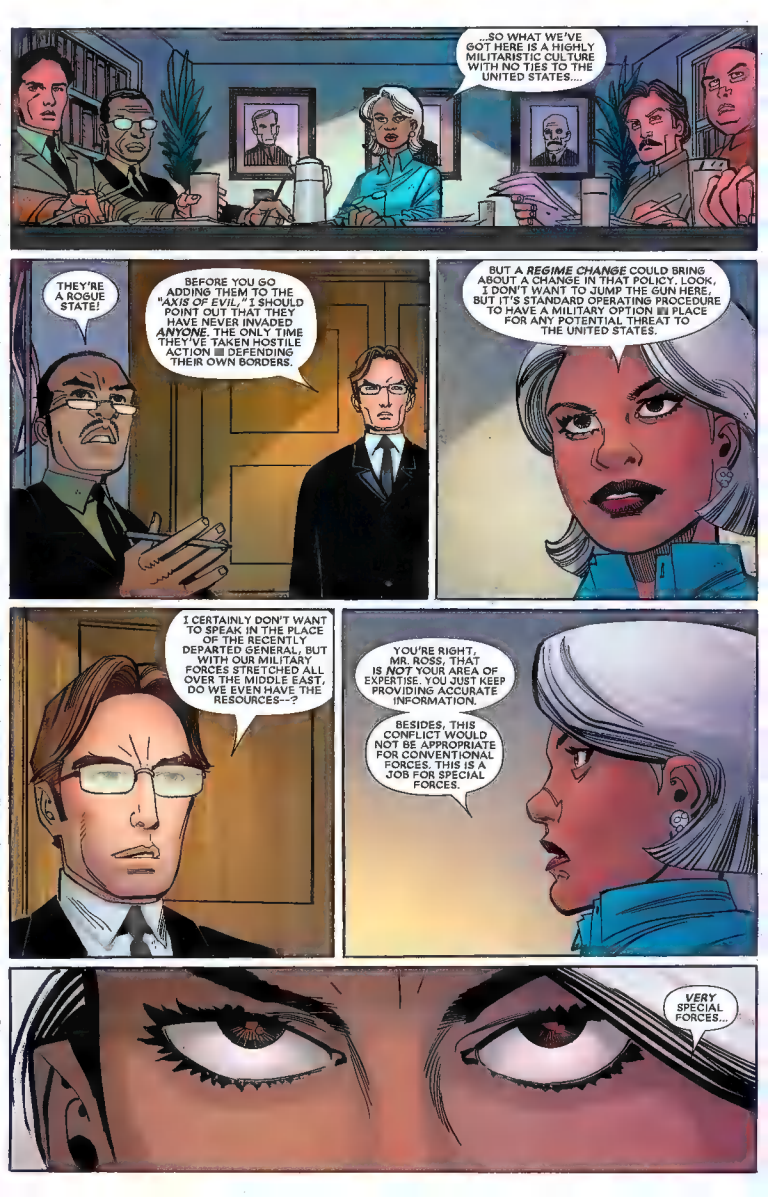
INCOMING!
EXCUSE ME! CONTESTANT COMING THROUGH!
DON'T LEAVE YET, I'M ABOUT TO--
BARROOM!
GET OFF ME!
HEY, I'M SUPPOSED TO GO NEXT!

HMM! THE MYSTERY MAN SURE IS COCKY! I WOULDN'T GIVE THE PANTHER A CHANCE TO RECOVER AFTER THAT LAST GUY.
I GUESS HE DOESN'T WANT ANYONE TO QUESTION HIS VICTORY--
--YEAH RIGHT! AS IF!
HEY! GET UP! I'M UNDER HERE!

NOW THIS IS A FIGHT!
WHO IS THAT MASKED MAN?
AW MAN! I WAS GONNA DO THAT MOVE!
PRINCESS!
WHEN DID YOU GET HERE?

THE MATCH IS OVER!
PLEASE REMOVE YOUR MASK.
THE NEW BLACK PANTHER IS...
...T'CHALLA! SON OF T'CHAKA!
I KNEW IT! WHO ELSE COULD FIGHT THAT WELL BUT ROYALTY?
YOU KNEW NO SUCH THING.
I WAS ROBBED! BY MY OWN BROTHER!

ARE YOU OKAY, UNCLE?
FINE--NOW THAT I KNOW IT WAS YOU!
T'CHALLA!!
T'CHALLA!!
T'CHALLA!!
LOOK AT MY FATHER... SO HAPPY THAT IT ISN'T ME. HE MADE SURE OF THAT.
IT WAS A FAIR FIGHT. BOTH T'CHALLA'S...AND YOURS.
WHAT DO YOU KNOW?
DID YOU HEAR? YOUR SON--
--WON. YES, I KNOW. IT WAS INEVITABLE.
BUT...WHY ARE YOU SAD? HE HAS ASCENDED TO HIS FATHER'S THRONE!
MAKING HIM A BETTER TARGET.


...SO WHAT WE'VE GOT HERE IS A HIGHLY MILITARISTIC CULTURE WITH NO TIES TO THE UNITED STATES....
THEY'RE A ROGUE STATE!
BEFORE YOU GO ADDING THEM TO THE "AXIS OF EVIL," I SHOULD POINT OUT THAT THEY HAVE NEVER INVADED ANYONE. THE ONLY TIME THEY'VE TAKEN HOSTILE ACTION ■ DEFENDING THEIR OWN BORDERS.
BUT A REGIME CHANGE COULD BRING ABOUT A CHANGE IN THAT POLICY. LOOK, I DON'T WANT TO JUMP THE GUN HERE, BUT IT'S STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE TO HAVE A MILITARY OPTION ■ PLACE FOR ANY POTENTIAL THREAT TO THE UNITED STATES.
I CERTAINLY DON'T WANT TO SPEAK IN THE PLACE OF THE RECENTLY DEPARTED GENERAL, BUT WITH OUR MILITARY FORCES STRETCHED ALL OVER THE MIDDLE EAST, DO WE EVEN HAVE THE RESOURCES--?
YOU'RE RIGHT, MR. ROSS, THAT IS NOT YOUR AREA OF EXPERTISE. YOU JUST KEEP PROVIDING ACCURATE INFORMATION.
BESIDES, THIS CONFLICT WOULD NOT BE APPROPRIATE FOR CONVENTIONAL FORCES. THIS IS A JOB FOR SPECIAL FORCES.
VERY SPECIAL FORCES...

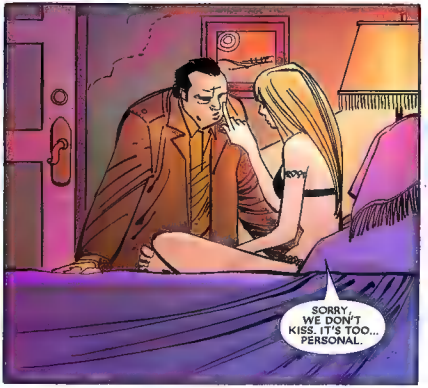
WHO IS IT?

KLAW...
...AND A VERY SPECIAL FRIEND.

TAKE YOUR PICK, GENTLEMEN.
NONE FOR ME, THANKS. BUT MY FRIEND HERE HAS BEEN AWAY FOR A WHILE, SO I'M TREATING HIM.

GOOD CHOICE. WHEN SHOULD I COME BACK?

OH, I'D SAY AN HOUR. AT LEAST.


SORRY. WE DON'T KISS. IT'S TOO... PERSONAL.

I UNDERSTAND. DOES THIS MAKE IT WORTH YOUR WHILE?
NO, I'M SORRY--
HOW ABOUT NOW? IT'S JUST ONE KISS.
OKAY... JUST ONE.

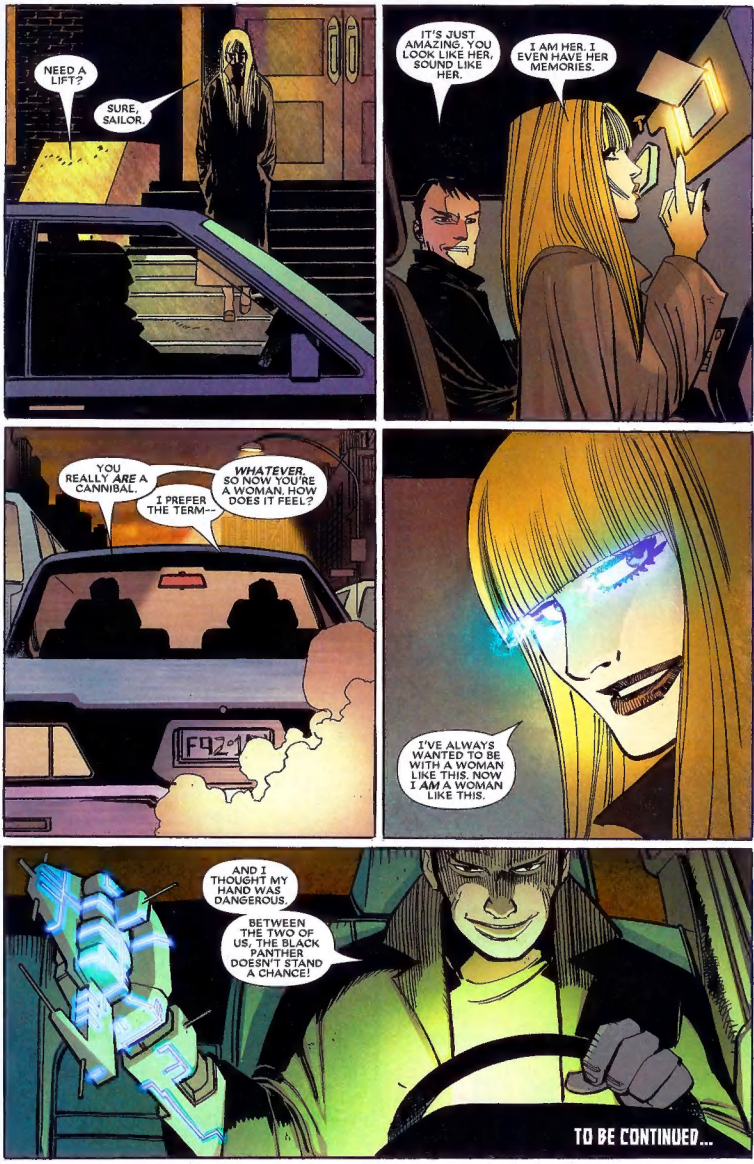
...YES, WE DO HAVE A VALENTINE'S DAY SPECIAL...

WHERE ARE YOU GOING? YOUR SHIFT'S NOT DONE YET!
I QUIT.

WHERE'S YOUR CLIENT?

EXCUSE ME-- SIR? ARE YOU STILL HERE?

OH NO! CALL CLEAN-UP!


NEED A LIFT?
SURE, SAILOR.
IT'S JUST AMAZING. YOU LOOK LIKE HER, SOUND LIKE HER.
I AM HER. I EVEN HAVE HER MEMORIES.
YOU REALLY *ARE* A CANNIBAL.
I PREFER THE TERM--
WHATEVER. SO NOW YOU'RE A WOMAN. HOW DOES IT FEEL?
I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO BE WITH A WOMAN LIKE THIS. NOW I *AM* A WOMAN LIKE THIS.
AND I THOUGHT MY HAND WAS DANGEROUS.
BETWEEN THE TWO OF US, THE BLACK PANTHER DOESN'T STAND A CHANCE!
TO BE CONTINUED...

MAIL TO THE KING!

Hey Pantherphiles,

Welcome to the first installment of MAIL TO THE KING. We'll be here each and every month to answer your questions, respond to the love *and* the hate, and drop a little temptation to ya about all the mind-blowing stories Reggie and JRJR have waiting just around the corner.

For now, I'm going to zip my lips and listen to what you had to say about our first issue.

—Cory

Dear Mail to the King,

You're getting my letter about BLACK PANTHER #1 early because of an advance preview posted at the forum of the Museum of Black Superheroes (www.blacksuperhero.com). Though I tried to wait until February, I finally yielded to temptation and read the preview.

Wow! When I heard about a new BLACK PANTHER series, I was naturally concerned if it would be a worthy follow-up to Christopher Priest's acclaimed run, which incidentally got me buying comics again. Then, online interviews with new writer Reggie Hudlin (*Birth of a Nation*) discussing his take on T'Challa and Wakanda began to ease my worries. After reading positive comments from writers like Mark Millar (ULTIMATES VOL. 2) and Dwayne McDuffie (*Static Shock*, *Justice League Unlimited*), my fear turned into eager anticipation.

Yet, I am still stunned at how well Hudlin and artist John Romita, Jr. pay homage to the work of past creators (Stan Lee, Kirby, Priest) while bringing a fresh perspective. For example, it's pretty original in any medium for a story exploring how the world would react to an advanced, thriving African nation (Wakanda) that had resisted colonization and evolved without external influence. Hudlin and Romita appreciate the creative potential of this premise ranging from epic battles like the Wakandans' ingenious use of strategy and technology to repel would-be conquerors over the centuries (the giant crossbow attack and the Wakandan weapon that causes guns to backfire are especially cool.) to whip-smart satire like how the 19th century European invaders go on and on about being so "civilized" even though they shot unarmed African workers in the back the previous night.

Another brilliant stroke in the series is the straightforward retelling of the Black Panther's origin, which hasn't been done since FANTASTIC FOUR #53. This oversight may account for so many comic readers dismissing the Panther as a knockoff of more familiar super heroes (e.g., Batman). However, the backstory detailed in BLACK PANTHER #1 alone underscores how T'Challa comes from a radically different world than other super heroes and is thus quite unique. Moreover, it's logical that the Panther would be so formidable an opponent since he hails from the best scientists and warriors on Earth.

However, the biggest shock is the ending, which reveals that Issue #1's narrator is none other than T'Challa's archenemy, Klaw. In the context of the story, Klaw declaring that he'll defeat the Wakandans as he did T'Chaka (T'Challa's father) casts the villain in a more ominous light. And, like any good cliffhanger, there are enough unanswered questions to convince readers to buy the next issue. Personally, I'm wondering if Klaw's new human appearance indicates a greater mastery of his solid sound powers.

As cliché as this may sound, BLACK PANTHER lives up to the hype because Hudlin and Romita have forged a new direction for the classic series. It is truly worthy of Marvel's intense promotion through various means: on-line interviews, mail-in subscriptions, print ads, etc.

So, here's looking to more adventures of the King of the Wakandans for years to come.

Frederick D. Weaver
Washington, DC

Dear Reg, J.R., Klaus, et. al.,

Wow. I wasn't planning on picking up BLACK PANTHER today. It was kind of an impulse buy at the register, so I wasn't expecting to be absolutely blown away, cover to cover.

The history of Wakanda as a strong, independent nation full of people who are both scientific geniuses and feared warriors was brilliant. It boggles the mind to imagine the achievements that could have arisen from the oldest civilizations on earth had they not been fettered by European colonization.

The artwork was fantastic, as well. The entire team really captured the sweeping grandeur and stifling heat of the African savannahs. I especially liked the subtle variations of Dean White's colors as the story progresses through the different eras.

I'm eagerly looking forward to the next issue. Black Panther's place as an A-list hero in the Marvel pantheon is long overdue.

Colin Solan
Fitchburg, MA

Mail to the King,

I just read the first issue of the new BLACK PANTHER series. You guys are off to a great start! The set-up is beautiful! I bought three copies! I am a total fan of the King of Wakanda. Keep up the great work. And let's all make a vow that we will do everything in our power to keep this series from getting cancelled. I can't wait for the next issue.

Chalon,
Wakandan Warrior

OK, OK, I know I promised to zip my lips, but when you've got news like BLACK PANTHER's own REGGIE HUDLIN debuting on MARVEL KNIGHTS SPIDER-MAN #13 with BILLY TAN, artist of the mega-hot X-23, this APRIL it's hard to shut up!

VILLAINS ON THE MOVE! PANTHER ON THE PROWL! COULD 30 DAYS SEEM ANY LONGER?

CORY SEDLMEIER
ASST. EDITOR

AXEL ALONSO
EDITOR

JOE QUESADA
CHIEF

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